that was appended to the data stream by the input control 14. The interface control 26 then determines whether the flag indicates the presence or absence of appended compression and encryption data at step D6.

If the data stream contains appended compression and encryption data, the interface control 26 reads the compression type and encryption type and sets a compression indicator T_c to indicate the compression type and an encryption indicator T_e to indicate the encryption type at steps D8, D10. The interface control 26 then removes all the appended information from the data stream at step D12, and outputs the data stream, the encryption indicator T_e, and the compression indicator T_c at step D14. If the data stream does not contain appended compression and encryption data, the interface control 26 removes any information that has been appended to the data stream at steps D18, D12, and outputs the data stream, the encryption indicator T_e, and the compression indicator T_c at step D14.

The source decoding control 24 decompresses and/or decrypts the data stream. The operation of the source decoding control 24 is shown in FIG. 3. The source decoding control 24 first determines whether the compression indicator T_c indicates that the data stream is compressed, and if so, the type of compression at step B4. If the data stream is compressed, the source decoding control 24 decompresses the data stream at step B6 in accordance with the compression indicator T_c. The source decoding control 24 then determines whether the encryption indicator T_e indicates that the data stream is encrypted, and if so, the type of encryption at step B8. If the data stream is encrypted, the source decoding control 24 decrypts the data stream at step B10 in accordance with T_e. The source decoding control then outputs the decompressed and/or decrypted data stream at step B12.

The display device 20 displays the decoded data stream. Display devices are well known in the art. Any suitable display device can be chosen for use with the invention.

Having thus described a preferred embodiment of the invention, it should be apparent to those skilled in the art that certain advantages have been achieved. It should also be appreciated that various modifications, adaptations, and alternative embodiments thereof may be made within the scope and spirit of the present invention. The invention is further defined by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for encoding source data comprising:

data compressor means for compressing said source data;

source coding control means coupled to said data compressor means for computing a size of said source data and a size of said compressed data, comparing the size of said source data to the size of said compressed data, and outputting output data,

wherein said output data comprises said compressed data if the size of said source data exceeds the size of said compressed data by a given threshold, and said output data comprises said source data if the size of said source data does not exceed the size of said compressed data by the given threshold; and

encoder means coupled to said data compressor means for encoding said output data according to a coded symbol symbology.

2. The system of claim 1 further including input control means coupled to said encoder means for appending data to said encoded output data.

3. The system of claim 2 wherein said input control means further comprises means for setting a flag in said encoded

output data, said flag indicating that said appended data was appended to said encoded output data.

4. The system of claim 3 wherein said input control means further comprises means for determining whether said encoded output data includes unused data, and wherein if said encoded output data includes unused data, said unused data comprises said flag, and if said encoded output data does not include unused data, said appended data comprises said flag.

5. The system of claim 2 wherein said appended data comprises a compression type indicator.

6. The system of claim 2 further comprising data encryptor means coupled to said data compressor means for encrypting said source data.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein said appended data comprises an encryption type indicator.

8. A system for encoding source data into the form of a one or two dimensional bar code symbology, said symbology having a predefined structure, said system comprising:

data encryptor means for encrypting said source data;

encoder means coupled to said data encryptor means for encoding said encrypted data according to said bar code symbology; and

input control means coupled to said encoder means for appending data to said encoded data within an unused portion of said predefined structure, said appended data comprising an encryption type indicator.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein said input control means further comprises means for setting a flag in said encoded data, said flag indicating that said appended data was appended to said encoded output data.

10. A system for encoding source data comprising:

data encryptor means for encrypting said source data:

encoder means coupled to said data encryptor means for encoding said encrypted data according to a coded symbol symbology; and

input control means coupled to said encoder means for appending data to said encoded data, said appended data comprising an encryption type indicator;

wherein said input control means further comprises means for setting a flag in said encoded data, said flag indicating that said appended data was appended to said encoded output data, and means for determining whether said encoded data includes unused data, and wherein if said encoded data includes unused data, said unused data comprises said flag, and if said encoded data does not include unused data, said appended data comprises said flag.

11. A system for decoding data representing a coded symbol pattern according to a predetermined symbology, said system comprising:

reader means for reading a coded symbol and producing encoded data representing said coded symbol, said encoded data comprising compression data,

decoder means coupled to said reader means for decoding said encoded data, and

source decoding control means coupled to said decoder means for decompressing said decoded data in accordance with said compression data, wherein said compression data comprises a compression type indicator included within an unused portion of said predetermined symbology.

12. A system for decoding data representing a coded symbol pattern according to a predetermined symbology, said system comprising: